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PREPARATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ON THE BASIS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 44/228 AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT OTHER RELEVANT GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS:

CROSS-SECTORAL ISSUES

Progress Report on Poverty and Environmental Degradation

Report of the Secretary-General of the Conference

INTRODUCTION

1. General Assembly resolution 44/228 specifies that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development should address the issue of "improvement of the living and working environment of the poor in urban slums and rural areas, through the eradication of poverty by, inter alia, implementing integrated rural and urban development programmes, as well as taking other appropriate measures at all levels necessary to stem the degradation of the environment". The discussion on environment and development links at the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee dealt specifically with the issue of the links between poverty and environmental degradation. This preliminary report has been prepared in response to subparagraph (a) (i) of decision 1/25 on Environment and Development adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session. It has been prepared by the Secretariat in collaboration with relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations System.

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2. This report takes due account of the findings and recommendations of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development and the UNEP Environment Perspectives to Year 2000 and Beyond as well as written comments prepared by FAO, ILO, UNDP, the World Bank. The World Bank's "World Development Report", 1990, which deals with poverty and the UNDP's "Human Development Report", 1990, provided valuable inputs for this paper. The International Fund for Agricultural Development provided a series of studies focusing on the issue of environmental sustainability and rural poverty alleviation as also on the role of small farmers. The Swedish International Development Agency has submitted to the Secretariat a preliminary study on poverty, environment and development which has also been taken into account in the preparation of this paper. The Secretariat also received inputs from the International Institute of Environment and Development.

3. This report must be seen in the context of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade which stresses four priority aspects of development, all of which are relevant to the theme of this paper:

- Eradication of poverty and hunger;
- Human Resource and Institutional Development;
- Population;
- Environment.

4. The eradication of poverty and the protection of the environment are difficult to pursue in a situation where national income is not growing or is even declining, where terms of trade and losses accumulate and where the burden of debt reduces greatly the resources available both for current consumption as also for investment. Hence, a macro-economic environment with stable and higher growth, an increase in the resources available for savings and investment as also a policy environment which stimulates efficiency of resource use are in many ways a necessary condition for the success of any programmatic interventions directed at the links between poverty and environmental degradation. Subject to this basic qualification the Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the analysis of issues and potential areas for action presented below.

DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY

5. The dimensions of poverty have been analysed carefully in two recent reports by United Nations agencies. 1/ Some basic data, drawn from the "Human Development Report" are presented in Table I. Defining the poverty line as the income level below which a minimum nutritionally adequate diet plus essential non-food requirements are not affordable, the reports estimate that over 1 billion people live in absolute poverty in the Third World. Asia has 64 per cent of the developing countries' people in absolute poverty, Africa 24 per cent and Latin America and the Caribbean 12 per cent. Between 1970 and 1985 it appears that poverty grew fastest in Africa. This is also borne out by available data on nutritional status.

6. Human deprivation cannot be measured solely in terms of the number of people below a poverty line defined in terms of consumption. The

TABLE I

POVERTY AND NATURAL RESOURCES INDICATORS

Indicators	All Developing Countries	Least Developed Countries	Sub-Saharan Africa	Middle East and North Africa	South Asia	East and South East Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	Industrial Countries	World
Population below Poverty Line (1977-87)									
URBAN %	27	59	34	--	41	--	36	--	--
RURAL %	35	72	61	--	53	18	61	--	--
Population Density (Persons per 1,000 hectares (1988))	1,583	2,635	595	463	2,971	1,368	388	1,088	1,467
Arable Land as % of Total (1984-86)	36	37	37	26	50	38	37	34	35
Livestock Per Capita (1984-86) Cattle Units per capita	0.73	1.07	0.99	1.09	0.63	0.48	1.42	1.11	0.82
Internal Renewable Water Resources Per Capita (1988) (1,000 cubic meters)	6.2	10.5	3.5	1.3	3.4	5.1	22.9	9.3	6.8

Source: UNDP, 1990 "Human Development Report", Oxford University Press, New York

"Human Development Report" estimates that 1.5 billion people in developing countries do not have access to health services, 1.75 billion do not have access to safe water, 2.8 billion do not have access to sanitation. It estimates the 870 million adults in developing countries are illiterate, 150 million children are malnourished and 240 million who ought to be in school are not in school. Summarizing these other dimensions of deprivation in terms of life expectancy and illiteracy, and combining this with per capita GDP, the "Human Development Report" defines a composite human development index. Estimates of this index show that human deprivation is most marked in the least developed countries and at the regional level in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The range of this index for all developing countries is wide reflecting the great variation in the state of human development.

7. About three quarters of the developing countries' poor people live in rural areas. The rural poor are extremely variegated. They include landless labourers, subsistence farmers, tenant share croppers, women heads of household and children, unemployed youth, pastoralists, nomadic herders, ethnic or tribal minorities, small fishermen, the remote poor living in mountains and deserts and hunter gatherers within countries. There are also significant regional differences in the incidence of poverty within countries.

8. Though poverty in the Third World is primarily a rural phenomenon there is a recent trend towards the urbanization of poverty which is reflected in the rapid increase in urban slums and squatters settlements. Poverty also has a gender bias and a large proportion of poor households are headed by women. This is particularly so in rural Africa and in the urban slums of Latin America. The available evidence also shows a close link between poverty and environmental degradation. Nearly three quarters of the poor live in ecologically vulnerable areas with low agricultural potential - arid lands, soils with low fertility, steep slopes and in areas distant from the more rapidly growing parts of the economy. In many of these areas the growth of population has decreased the productivity of land and increased its vulnerability to flooding and soil erosion. 2/

9. The deprivation that poverty represents also leads to the poor being more vulnerable to external or internal stress. External stress can manifest itself in terms of adverse movements, in the terms of trade for export crops, exchange rate fluctuations or high interest rates while internal stress can arise from national economic conditions such as lack of investment and inflation, weather-related stress, urban congestion and alike. The pressures of fuelwood gathering, inappropriate farming techniques, population growth and over-grazing may, by decreasing the productivity of marginal lands, make the poor even more susceptible to drought and other natural disasters. There are also indications that the poor tend to settle in disaster prone areas more vulnerable to floods and land slides since often these are the only areas available to them.

THE UNDERLYING CAUSES

10. The link between poverty and environmental degradation is multi-faceted and complex, and the underlying causes have to be seen in terms of a variety of socio-cultural, institutional economic factors including the orientation of public policies. This analysis focuses attention on the macro-economic context within which development is taking place, demographic developments and access to means of livelihood and sustenance.

The Macro-economic Context

11. Economic growth in excess of population growth is imperative to reduce poverty in poor countries. Recognizing this, the World Commission on Environment and Development called for a new era of growth, based on sustainable resource use, as part of the strategy for sustainable development. 3/ The record of growth over the past three decades is presented in Table II. As this table shows, per capita incomes have declined sharply in Africa and Latin America during the eighties. In Sub-Saharan Africa per capita income now is lower than what it was 30 years ago. Current projections envisage a continued decline in per capita incomes in Sub-Saharan Africa even in the nineties. At the same time, it may be noted that South and East Asia, which account for more than half of the population of the developing countries, continued to grow at a pace significantly faster than the global average. 4/

12. For many developing countries the 1980s were characterized by shrinking resource flows, declining commodity prices, a rising international debt burden and increasing barriers to market access. The long-term vision required for pursuing sustainable development was difficult to maintain in this adverse economic environment.

13. According to some estimates, presented recently to the General Assembly, the net transfer of financial resources out of developing countries has been negative from 1983 onwards. 5/ This net outflow of resources from developing countries has its causes in a conjunction of factors, one of which is the increase in interest rates in the industrialized countries in order to counter inflationary pressures.

14. Because of adverse movements in the terms of trade and a lack of ability to increase export earnings rapidly enough, many countries could not cope with the rapid rise in debt service. With the debt crisis, finance from private creditors dried up and left many developing countries with huge debts to be serviced and no means to generate resources to halt the outflow of resources to industrialized economies.

15. The deterioration in the terms of trade for developing countries throughout the 1980s jeopardized their capacity to service their external debts and finance national development programmes. Between 1980 and 1988, the real prices of non-fuel commodities from developing countries declined by 40 per cent while fuel prices declined by 50 per cent. The terms of trade index for Sub-Saharan Africa dropped from 100 in 1984 to 72 in 1989. For a sample of middle-income highly indebted countries, which usually have a more diversified structure of exports, this index also plunged from 90 to 72 in the same period. 6/

16. The compounded impact of sizeable negative net financial transfers and adverse movements of the terms of trade generated a heavy burden for economies of many developing countries. The cost equivalance in terms of GDP of the reverse transfer of resources because of interest rate and terms of trade changes could amount to as much as 14 per cent for Sub-Saharan Africa, if changes during 1984-88 are compared to the average for the 1970s. For Latin America and the Carribean the same figure amounts to 10.3 per cent. 7/ The impact of these adverse international economic conditions on poverty and

TABLE II

POPULATION AND GROWTH OF GDP PER CAPITA, BY ECONOMIC REGION AND INCOME GROUPS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, 1960 - 1990 a/

Country group	Population (1980)		Average annual rate of growth GDP per capita			Per capita GDP			
	Millions	Percentage share	1961 - 1970	1971 - 1980	1981 - 1990	1960	1970	1980	1990
World	4 371 b/	100.0	3.2	1.9	1.3	1 601	2 191	2 647	3 000
Developed market economies	768	17.6	3.9	2.4	2.1	5 501	8 042	10 185	12 490
Eastern Europe c/	378	8.6	6.2	4.2	2.3	1 154	2 101	3 192	4 010
China	996	22.8	2.0	4.1	7.5	169	198	290	600
Developing Countries	2 230	51.0	3.3	2.4	0.1	556	763	971	980
By regions:									
North Africa	88	2.0	8.2	1.2	-0.3	590	1 284	1 438	1 400
Sub-Saharan Africa	364	8.3	1.8	-0.4	-2.6	514	606	580	440
Western Asia	88	2.0	4.1	1.0	-4.3	2 478	3 700	4 180	2 730
South and East Asia	1 262	28.9	2.6	4.1	3.7	228	293	435	620
Latin America and the Caribbean	361	8.3	2.7	2.4	-1.1	1 409	1 831	2 320	2 090
Mediterranean	68	1.6	3.7	3.7	1.1	924	1 322	1 936	2 160
Least Developed Countries	312	7.1	1.1	-0.2	-0.3	227	254	249	241

Source: "Overall Socio-economic Perspective of the World Economy to the Year 2000", United Nations, New York, 1990.

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a/ At 1980 dollars and exchange rates.

b/ Excludes a number of countries and territories, with a combined population of 79 million in 1980, for which income data are not available.

c/ Based on net material product (NMP)

environmental degradation was felt through a squeeze on public spending and both public and private investment. The impact on real growth is reflected in the growth and of poverty and unemployment in these countries. The pressure on public resources lead to curtailment of very necessary expenditures on resource management, environmental protection, health and education since these are the sectors most dependent on an adequate flow of resources into the public exchequer. The balance of payments pressures arising from the debt burden and adverse terms of trade when combined with the dependence on primary commodities in many of these countries could have led to some strains on the natural resource base of these countries.

17. The transition to sustainable development is difficult to pursue in a context where national income is declining, investible resources are reduced and the terms of trade are moving in an adverse direction. Hence, international initiatives for arresting the reverse transfer of resources, providing external assistance, and structuring technical co-operation to build human and national capabilities will be required. Along with this, it is necessary to have a national policy framework that ensures macro-economic stability, promotes efficiency in the use of resources and reduces the vulnerability to internal and external stress. These issues while not discussed here cannot be lost sight of as they are important in the whole context of development, especially poverty alleviation and human development.

The Demographic Dimension

18. Two aspects of demographic pressures are frequently emphasized in the literature: one is that of size and the other is that of the rate of growth. The link between the size of the population and poverty is more ambiguous as relatively sparsely populated countries are often poorer than more densely populated ones and the difference cannot be fully explained by the differences in resource endowments. The effect of high rates of population growth on poverty and environmental deterioration is less ambiguous. High rates of population growth reduce the savings and investment capacity of an economy, increase requirements of public funds for social infrastructure and reduce the time available for adjusting settlement patterns and natural resource use, even when these are available in abundance, to higher levels of population size. All this puts pressure on the adaptive capacities of the socio-economic system and leads often to unsustainable pressures on land, forests and water bodies and to deteriorating environmental conditions in settlements. 8/

19. At the conceptual level, under conditions of extreme poverty, specially rural poverty, for individual families more children could imply an access to higher income levels. At a relatively early age children contribute to the family's income stream by looking after animals, collecting firewood, and even working as field hands. In this way, under conditions of extreme poverty the private marginal cost of having an extra child may be lower than the marginal return from that child. Yet, the converse may apply as well - more children implying a greater prevalence of poverty. While empirical studies do not clearly establish cause and effect, we do know that whereas, on average, 15-30 per cent of families in developing countries, as a whole, have eight or more members, the proportion of poor families with that many members is 55-80 per cent. Poorest communities, therefore, tend to have relatively high dependency ratios, with considerable pressure on economically-active members to provide income and food security. Another link between poverty and high

population growth rates could be affected through poverty-induced lower education of women, high infant mortality and the consequent higher fertility and population growth rate.

20. The effect of higher population density or sheer numbers is more obvious in an urban context. The structural changes involved in the process of economic growth implies that urban populations typically grow more rapidly than rural populations as part of their growth comprises migration from the rural areas. Environmental degradation in rural areas could force higher levels of migration to urban areas and thereby exacerbate urban stress. 9/ The crowding of urban areas presents the most visible and immediate evidence of the pressure which population growth imposes on the environment. Urban living requires substantially higher per capita expenditures on the provision of water, waste disposal, and transport than in rural areas. The rapid growth in population stretches the existing public health and sanitation facilities beyond its capacity resulting in urban pollution and diseases on a large scale.

21. Another obvious manifestation of the pressure which the size of the population imposes on poverty and the environment can be felt through the degradation and depletion of water resources. In many developing countries, overuse of both surface and ground water resources is leading to scarcity and deteriorating quality of water. In coastal areas, rising demands cause people to overdraw aquifers, which can cause salinization of the shallow ground water on which many people depend. The depletion and overfishing of rural ponds and tanks perhaps because of population pressures would also affect both the environment and the poverty of rural communities. Lack of safe drinking water continues to be a serious public health problem as witnessed by millions of children who die annually from diarrheal and other sanitation-related diseases.

22. In the rural areas where most of the poor live, rural population growth leads to fragmentation of holdings, intensification of land use, reduction in fallow periods and the extension of cultivation to marginal lands. This may take the form of a shift towards previously unoccupied land, or to previously forested areas either in the wake of logging operations or directly after clearing by prospective farmers. Even within agriculture, some lands may be farmed more intensively increasingly with the aid of irrigation, while other land may be switched from subsistence to cash crops, which require higher chemical and energy inputs, perhaps leading to soil degradation. 10/ The problems of waterlogging and salinity often follow from irrigation schemes that are poorly designed and badly maintained. A counter argument suggests that intensification, by raising the per hectare productivity of existing crop land, can have positive environmental consequences by restricting the need to expand cultivation into marginal lands.

23. Pasture and rangeland degradation, along with erosion or deforestation, may occur because human and livestock pressures approach or even exceed the carrying capacities of rangelands. 11/ The increased demand for fuelwood caused by both poverty and rapid population growth has been identified as one of the major causes of deforestation in the more arid and high altitude regions where wood grows relatively slowly. 12/ As sustainable production falls, people must cut further into the tree stock in order to meet their fuelwood needs.

Access to Means of Livelihood

24. Unequal access to natural resources, for instance cultivable land, can lead to the cultivation of marginal lands and hilly tracts. Thus the question of access to means of livelihood may also have an important impact on the environment and to a large extent explain why families living in extreme poverty may prefer to have larger families. The social cost of a large and growing impoverished population is too high in terms of low productivities perpetuated by the malnourishment and the poor health of women and children, and thus to some extent the key to the population issue is also equity in the distribution of the means of production as well as equal access to other complementary inputs in production.

25. Additionally women often have limited access to assets and employment opportunities, and institutions which provide credit and disseminate information on technology may discriminate against women. This may block the access of women-headed households to any form of agricultural credit or to agricultural technology and may impel such households to cultivate marginal lands.

26. Landslessness is perhaps the most common and the obvious source of loss of access to a means of livelihood for the rural population in the third world. Further, the commercialization and/or privatization of common lands may extend to forests or grazing lands, and even water resources leading to further loss of access to water resources or forest resources which may form an integral part of the means of survival for the poor. Throughout history the poor have depended on commons to gather food, firewood, fish, game and other resources and traditional management régimes have frequently protected them from overuse. However, these régimes are breaking down and the deterioration of commons through overuse has eroded the means of sustenance of the poor who depend on them.

27. The problem of landlessness is further compounded by a less than commensurate increase in employment in the non-agricultural sector. Not all displaced peasantry are able to find non-agricultural employment, and thus small farmers may colonize the hinterland. This has been manifested in the colonization of humid lowlands, steep hillsides and other fragile hinterlands in Asia, Africa and Latin America. 13/ It has also been observed that agricultural colonization of hinterlands is a consequence of the fact that large farmers are able to influence the market and the tenurial environment. 14/

28. The tenurial rights conferred on people in the rural areas may in turn lead to environmental degradation. For example, when a farmer has a limited tenure on the land that he tills, he faces the risk of future dispossession, and may tend to disregard the benefits of soil conservation which may be realized only after the passage of several years. In many tenure régimes individuals only hold use rights on the land, and may be entitled to exclude other uses only as long as they can employ the parcel in a particular way. Thus, any user will place little weight on the benefits of conservation (such as better forest management or delayed forestation) if adopting it jeopardizes his tenure or decreases his profits in the duration of his tenure. 15/

29. Small producers may find it difficult to obtain credit at competitive rates and thus be discouraged from making near-term sacrifices for long-term gains. Thus, they may end up mining land intensively or over-exploiting other

natural resources and may not adopt conservation practices. The markets for crops and livestock may also be imperfect so that small farmers may be forced to accept low prices for their crops and livestock. Thus, reduced market access may discourage small farmers from investing in natural resource inputs to agriculture, particularly in applying conservation measures. In the same way that this phenomenon manifests itself in local or national markets unequal access to international markets can also lead to the deterioration of the environment.

30. The poor typically live in remote locations with little access to infrastucture and transport. 16/ Many of them live in remote areas from and to which the costs of transport links with markets are high. This limits the options available for sustainable resources use particularly to the poor. The lack of access to technology further condemns the poor to low levels of productivity. Agricultural extension services and even research have been biased against marginal areas thus perpetuating the existing low levels of productivity.

31. The various forms of environmental degradation have different links with poverty and an analysis which differentiates between these categories would be useful in identifying the specific policy measures required to mitigate the harmful effects of poverty related environmental problems. Policy measures must thus take account of the links, the regional diversities and elucidate the global responsibilities for alleviating poverty along with safeguarding the environment.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

32. An environmental policy that focuses mainly on the conservation and protection of resources without regard to the livelihoods of those who depend on that resource for a living will impact adversely on poverty. Equally, development policy which focuses mainly on increasing the production of goods without concerning itself with the long-term potential of the resources on which production is based will sooner or later run into problems of declining productivity which also will impact adversely on poverty. An effective strategy to tackle problems of poverty development and environment simultaneously in developing countries should begin with focus not on resources or on production but on people. The objective of providing sustainable livelihoods for all could provide an integrating factor which allows policies to address issues of resource management, development and poverty eradication simultaneously.

33. The fact that the processes of economic growth and development may tend to leave behind certain groups in certain areas has been recognized both in national and in international policies. Recognition of this fact is reflcted in ameliorative programmes which address this problem. There are many different types of targeted poverty reduction programmes directed at specific groups of the population on specific areas. These programmes aim at one or more of the following:

1. Increasing access to productive assets through land reforms, or subsidies to acquire new assets, or ensuring traditional rights, etc.

2. Raising the productivity of productive assets through the provision of infrastructure, credit, technology and other inputs to small producers.

3. Developing human resources through health, education, technology extension, community development, etc.

4. Improving living conditions through the provision of social infrastructure particularly water supply, sanitation, housing and similar facilities.

34. Closely related to such targeted poverty reduction programmes are national and international measures of a protective nature to support consumption in periods of stress through relief programmes or through more long-term interventions directed at vulnerable groups, for example, nutrition support for women and children.

35. A closely linked set of interventions relates to special programmes directed at ecologically disadvantaged areas, like desert areas, drought prone areas, hilly areas, salinity-affected areas, flood-prone areas, etc. As stated earlier, a significant part of the population below the poverty line tend to live in such areas. However, these programmes often are of a somewhat technological nature addressing the specific resource management issues.

36. Targeted poverty reduction programmes, as also the special area development programmes, are often add-ons to normal development strategies. The need to provide a livelihood base to the poor and to protect the resource base in ecologically disadvantaged areas is often not integrated into the mainstream of development strategy. The productive potential represented by these people and by these areas is not taken into account in framing economy wide targets for production investment, etc. In a sense, what is reflected in these programmes is a welfare approach rather than a developmental approach. 17/

37. The promotion of sustainable livelihoods has to become a part of the mainstream of growth and development strategy. The target group orientation of anti-poverty programmes and the resource management dimensions of area development programmes must be combined into an integrated programme that simultaneously addresses both sets of issues. The objectives of such an integrated programme would be:

1. The generation of remunerative employment and productive occupational opportunities (farm and non-farm) on a scale sufficient to take care of prospective increases in the labour force and to cover backlogs from the past;

2. The development of infrastructure, marketing systems, technology systems, credit systems, etc., to support this as also to ensure a widening of options for resource poor households;

3. Substantial increases in resource productivity and measures to ensure that the local population benefits in adequate measure from resource use;

4. Rehabilitation of degraded resources and policy measures to prevent unsustainable resource use;

5. Development of mechanisms for public participation, particularly by poor households, to ensure sustainable development.

38. An integrated programme to promote sustainable livelihoods is likely to differ greatly from region to region depending on the nature of the resources available, the size of population and the rate at which it is growing, the options available for economic diversification, the social and cultural attitudes of the local people and many other factors. Hence decentralization of authority and responsibility for planning, promotion and programme management may well be central to the effectiveness of such programmes. Empowerment of local communities so that they have effective control over local resources, particularly common property resources, may also play an important role. This would also help to ensure local adaptation of new technologies, the fuller utilization of local knowledge of plant varieties, characteristics of waterbodies, etc. But at the same time, the effectiveness of such a programme would also depend on the extent to which the policy framework at the national level and the international environment help or hinder sustainable resource use at the local level.

39. The need for local specificity is particularly marked in the case of peoples who inhabit certain remote and ecologically fragile regions like the polar regions, the tropical rainforests, the high mountains, arid deserts and similar areas. These people often have a sense of ethnic and cultural separateness. They have an activity base which is very different from the rest of the population. Often they are pastoralists or nomads, or hunter gatherers or practice a method of agriculture which is very different from what would be considered modern practice. Sustainable development for such communities requires respect for their cultural traditions, for their local knowledge and their skill in adapting to an often hostile and fragile environment. Protecting the resources on which they depend for their livelihood and ensuring access should have the highest priority in any programme of development. The interaction of these communities with "the modern sector" can seriously weaken and disrupt them if it intrudes too much into their traditional ways of life or habitats. In the long run the future of these communities is best protected by widening the options available to them in a rapidly changing world.

40. The importance of widening options can be seen more sharply in certain areas where farmers have taken to the illegal cultivation of narcotic substances. In the nature of things these areas are generally remote from centres of administration and transport since such activities thrive best when surveillance is difficult. The direct environment consequences of such activities are of course not very well known. However, since many of these centres are in ecologically fragile regions, a widenig of options for sustainable production in resource-poor areas may well help in reducing the pressures for such illicit cultivation of narcotics.

41. In a certain sense the promotion of sustainable livelihoods in the sense described above has to be reflected not just in separate programmes but in the way in which sectoral programmes and policies are organized in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, mining, industry, energy, transport, etc. The ultimate aim must be to reflect this objective of sustainable livelihoods in all developmental activities at the national and international level.

FURTHER PROGRAMME OF WORK

42. The analysis presented in the previous section is preliminary in nature. It focuses on the factors underlying poverty and environmental degradation. It is equally important to study successful instances where these two problems have been tackled together.

43. The analysis presented above has been discussed with concerned agencies in the United Nations system and a further programme of work identified in order to refine the analysis and develop proposals for consideration by the Preparatory Committee. Specific issues which are being examined by the different agencies are given below:

World Bank:	An evaluation of anti-poverty programmes focusing on resource-management issues.
FAO:	Impact of low and high agricultural productivity on environmental degradation.
IFAD	The links between rural poverty and environmental degradation and food security.
ILO	The role of employment in promoting sustainable development.
WMO:	Links between health indicators, with a particular focus on women and children, and poverty and environmental degradation.
UNDP:	The views of field-oriented NGO's on the issue of poverty, environmental degradation and development.
UNFPA:	Demographic developments, poverty and environment.
UNICEF:	The impact of environmental stress on children.

44. In addition, the Swedish International Development Agency will develop further its study on the interrelationship between Poverty, Environment and Development as also a more specific consideration of the linkages of these issues with the question of freshwater availability. In the section that follows the Secretariat is placing before the Preparatory Committee some issues relating to some potential areas for action so as to provide further guidance to the Secretariat in its work.

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ACTION: SOME ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

45. The links between poverty and environmental degradation are complex and any comprehensive effort at addressing the problem would have to deal with the entire range of both national and international development policy. In particular, at the international level, the issue of the flow of resources and technologies for accelerating growth and promoting sustainable development as also issues of market access and trade barriers would be relevant. At the national level, the investments in physical infrastructure, promotion of technological innovation, public policies that stimulate efficiency in resource use, equity and access to resources and to opportunities of

development within the country are matters that would require attention. In a sense, sustainable development requires a change in development policies both internationally and nationally. Subject to this qualification the Preparatory Committee may wish to discuss the programmatic interventions required for the promotion of sustainable livelihoods, particularly in the areas subject to ecological stress. In this context, the Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the following issues:

1. What should be the time-frame for the objective of sustainable livelihoods for all at the national and international level?

2. As a first step would it be worth promoting specific sustainable development projects on a sufficiently wide-spread basis to have a significant impact both on the poverty and on environmental degradation? What are the priority areas for such projects?

3. Can such projects be seen as a further development of existing anti-poverty projects and area development projects?

4. How should national targets and priorities for the areas covered by such for the sustainable development projects be framed?

5. Would it be possible for bilateral and multilateral donors to accept the commitment to provide additional financial and technical assistance to developing countries for such sustainable development projects? What would be the mechanism through which such assistance would be best channelled?

46. The analysis presented earlier has brought out some of the dimensions of the links between demographic pressures, poverty and environmental degradation. The International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade recognizes that demograpic situation varies among countries but in most developing countries a lowering of the rate of population growth will relieve the strains on the social situation, economic growth, the environment and the use of natural resources. The Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the following issues:

1. Would a lowering of the population growth rate help to address more effectively the problems of poverty and environmental degradation particularly in areas subject to ecological stress?

2. Over half of the developing countries are pursuing active policies to reduce the rate of population growth. What are the lessons that can be learned from this experience so that the ingredients of an effective policy are better identified?

3. The status of women, their access to education and employment, as also improvements in their access to health care and to family planning services, have proved to be effective and successful instruments of population programmes in many countries. What are the specific programmatic measures which can be taken to strengthen this type of approach? Should assistance to developing countries in the area of population be substantially increased?

47. Improving the access of the rural and urban poor to health care, education, safe drinking water, sanitation and housing are important in

reducing deprivation. The Preparatory Committee may wish to discuss these programmatic dimensions as part of its discussions on health, human settlements, freshwater and waste management.

48. Finally, programmatic interventions which address the Poverty - Environment link must be co-ordinated with programmes which address issues like land degradation, deforestation, scarcity of freshwater, depletion of fishery resources, etc. The Preparatory Committee may wish to discuss the institutional mechanisms required at local, national and international level to secure this co-ordination.

Notes

1/ "World Development Report", 1990, The World Bank. "Human Development Report", 1990, UNDP.

2/ "World Development Report", 1990.

3/ "Our Common Future", Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Oxford, 1987.

4/ "Overall Social Economic Perspective of the World Economy to the year 2000", United Nations, New York, 1990.

5/ "Development and International Economic Co-operation, Net Transfer of Transfer of Resources from Developing Countries: Report of the Secretary-General", General Assembly A/45/487, United Nations, October 1990.

6/ Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, based on data of the IMF, the World Bank and the United Nations Statistical Office.

7/ See World Bank, World Development Report, 1990, p. 107.

8/ See Keyfitz, N., 1989 "Population growth can prevent development that would slow population growth" in Mathews, Jessica (ed.) "Preserving the Global Environment", WW Norton and Co., New York, 1991.

9/ Migration from rural to other rural areas could also increase because of environmental stress so that the poverty-environmental deterioration link spills from one area to another.

10/ It has been contended that cash crops deplete the soil of its nutrients, whereas subsistence crops, particularly legumes may replenish the soil nutrients. But the argument cannot be generalized. Subsistence crops that are not grown in leguminous rotation can "mine" soils. Also, there are marginal areas where perennials or non-food crops are often better adapted to the enviroment than subsistence crops.

11/ This, however, is not a static limit and carrying capacity can be raised through proper resource management.

Notes (continued)

12/ See Poore, D., 1983 Deforestation and the population factor, IUCN Bulletin 14, (1/2/3):26.

13/ See Southgate, D., 1988, The Economics of Land Degradation in the Third World. Environmental Department Working Paper No.2., The World Bank.

14/ See Blaikie, P., 1985, The Political Economy of soil erosion in developing countries, London: Longman group.

15/ Southgate D., and D. Pearce, 1987, "Natural resource degradation under agricultural colonization: a casual analysis", (discussion paper), Department of Economics, University College, London, 1987.

16/ Mellor, J.M., 1988, "The Intertwining of Environmental Problems and Poverty", in Environment, November 1988.

17/ There are exceptions to this both at the national and international level, e.g., at the international level IFAD is evolving approaches to Environmentally Sustainable Rural Poverty Alleviation.